

**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL
EDUCATION
Education Committee Meeting**

**LOCATION
Governor's Council Conference Room
3601 C Street
Anchorage, Alaska
Teleconference**

**Meeting Date
April 9, 2009**

Attendees:

Kris Johnston, Chair
Anna Attla
Julie Broyles
Taylor Gregg
Dean Konopasek
Ric Nelson
Eric Gebhart
Chris Saddler

Community Members/Guests:

David Kvasager
Janean Butler
Geri Benshoof
Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus
Belinda Burns
Angelina Ahrens
Kay Holmes
David Tarcy
Christie Reinhart
Dana McGuire

Staff:

Teresa Holt

Prepared by: Paula DiPaolo
Peninsula Reporting

CALL TO ORDER – 2:00 p.m.
ROLL CALL

Welcome from the Chair

Approval of Agenda

Dean Konopasek made a **MOTION** to approve the agenda. Eric Gebhart **SECONDED**. The motion was **APPROVED**.

Approval of Minutes

Anna Attla made a **MOTION** to approve the minutes from the March 12th meeting. Eric Gebhart **SECONDED**. The motion was **APPROVED**.

Correspondence

SB-109 removal of HSGQE

Teresa Holt stated that Bettye Davis reintroduced SB-109 that would repeal all of the statutes that require the exit exam for graduation. There have been two hearings and the audio is available for listening. The Department of Education was present at the first hearing and they were asked a lot of questions by Senators Stevens and Olson. Bettye Davis asked the Department, the State Board of Education, and the commissioner to come back with a position because the Department wasn't willing to say a lot one way or the other. They were willing to support the Work Ready regulations as a possible replacement.

The next hearing Teresa Holt listened to was only attended by Con Bunde who is the person who introduced the bill back in 2000. He was asked a lot of good questions including whether or not it has increased the graduation rates and he didn't think it had. He also didn't think it has prevented dropouts.

Teresa had a conversation with Tom Obermeyer, Bettye Davis's staffer on this, and he would like the Council's assistance in advocating for people to call in and give their opinion. The only other people they have heard from is NEA. Tom doesn't think that anything will be happening with the bill this year so it would give them the summer to get the word out for people to call in and time for the Council to take a position.

Teresa stated that if the Council votes to take a position on this, she would suggest they pull together a planning group and come up with an action plan.

Scheduling for SBAs and HSGQE

Julie Broyles stated that they are required to apply to the State for modifications to testing and one modification is flexible time for testing which allows a student to do better on the test given extra time. She stated that this year it seemed like it was a lot harder to get that modification and she's not sure why. Eric Gebhart commented that as far as he knew, there was a change in staff but not in policy.

Julie continued on to state that the problem is that one stipulation with the modification is that the student has to be near grade level, but obviously, if a student were near grade level, they wouldn't qualify for special education services.

The way Julie understands it, the time modification is a security issue with the test and that students might share the information. Eric Gebhart stated that the way they do it is have anybody involved with the test sign additional security agreements that they won't discuss questions with others because they are getting it early. Teresa Holt added that if you do something that's just beyond an accommodation, a form has to be filled out to justify the need and it has to be in the child's IEP.

Teresa Holt stated that she will contact Erik McCormick, who is the new assessment director, and see if they can come up with an answer as to why it's more difficult this year.

Autism Regulations

Teresa Holt stated that at the suggestion of Millie Ryan and Stephanie Birch, a proposal was made to the State Board of Education to allow a diagnosis of autism by an advanced nurse practitioner. This will come up at the June State Board of Education meeting and they need to give written comments on this by the 15th of May. Ric Nelson, Anna Attla, and Kris Johnston volunteered to help Teresa write comments that will be forwarded to the Executive Committee for approval.

Changing of MR to Cognitive Impairment or Intellectual Disability

Belinda Burns was contacted by several special education supervising teachers in Juneau asking if the Council is interesting in looking into changing the language into something that seems to be more respectful. She stated that other states are starting to use other language such as cognitive impairment instead of MR. She is aware that the federal law and state statutes as well as the DSM-IV say mental retardation. Julie Broyles stated that she thinks this change is long overdue and notes how many parents she sees that are hurt by the MR label. Christie Reinhart also agreed that many parents and teens are upset by the MR certification. She agrees that it would be much more respectful and noted that it's hard enough without that kind of archaic language.

Teresa Holt stated that they will do some research to see if it would require statutory changes or just changes in regulations. Geri Benshoof suggested going to the Department and asking them what the procedure would be to change it. Teresa also suggested they could talk to some people at the June State Board of Education meeting. Geri agreed to work with Teresa on this and noted that she could also talk to the commissioner.

Removal of IEP Benchmarks for Districts Implementing Weekly RTI Data

Teresa Holt stated that Dennis Clarkson from the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District brought to her attention the issue that he didn't believe the benchmarks on the IEPs are necessary for districts doing weekly data checks through the response to intervention. Kris Johnston suggested that they table this discussion to another meeting for time's sake.

Review of Annual Performance Report Indicators

Indicator 8

David Tarcy gave his presentation of Indicator 8, which is parent involvement, and referred the committee members to the PowerPoint presentation and the full report which were e-mailed to them. A copy of the full report can be found with the complete transcript of the meeting located at the Council office.

The following is a summary of questions or comments posed by committee members.

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus asked if in addition to the paper survey they send out to families, if they could do an online survey as well. David Tarcy replied that they are talking about doing that for next year.

Teresa Holt asked if they can divide the data by rural and urban areas. David Tarcy replied that they would need to clearly define “rural”, but they could do that.

Dana McGuire asked if there is a contact number if people need help filling out the survey. David Tarcy replied that the survey contains the phone number for the Department of Education, Office of Special Education. Andrew Koval is the person that fields most of those calls. Dana McGuire suggested adding local district or social service phone numbers as well. Teresa Holt added that at OSEP, they noted that if parents had a local parent training and information center to contact for assistance, the survey response rates went up considerably. Kris Johnston also suggested giving the PTIs a timeline to bundle the surveys and get them back to David.

Teresa Holt commented that only 16% of the parents replied and that it might only reflect people who are happy and not those who are very unhappy because they may have just washed their hands of everything. Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus agreed and noted that she felt like some of the questions did not address what she would have like to address. David Tarcy commented that he appreciates hearing those comments that address the validity of the study. Teresa Holt asked the committee members to look over the survey and e-mail her their suggestions.

Indicator 3

Teresa Holt referred the committee to the Annual Performance Report link and noted that Indicator 3 is on page 13. Indicator 3 deals with children with disabilities participating and their performance on statewide assessments and Teresa Holt went over the charts.

The following is a summary of questions or comments posed by committee members.

Julie Broyles asked why they don't list 9th grade on page 15 of the report. Teresa Holt suggested that maybe 9th isn't a test that's required by AYP, but she didn't know. Eric Gebhart stated that 9th grade is required. Teresa Holt

will e-mail Sharon Schumacher and ask her.

Ric Nelson asked why 5th grade didn't pass the target and 6th grade did on page 16 of the report. Eric Gebhart stated that the baseline was how kids scored in 2004 and then you have to go to 2013. He suggested that they probably started slow and then towards the end they will probably see some huge jumps in the targets. Teresa Holt added that it's also hard when you're looking at this grade by grade because it's not the same test for every grade.

Teresa stated that the State's improvement plan is contained on pages 18, 19, and 20 of the report and she would like committee members to review those activities and prepare to give comments or suggestions.

Teresa Holt then reported that this particular indicator ties to the Response to Intervention Initiative that regular education is doing. She gave an example that she learned in D.C. where they picked five pilot schools and they introduced a very strong response to intervention reading program where everybody gets a scientifically-based reading program. Those that weren't able to respond or keep up with the group then moved to tier 2 and they were given more intensive interventions to work on reading. If they didn't get through that then they moved on to tier 3 which is where individual reading plans happen. West Virginia was able to raise their scores from 15 percent to 30 percent in 5 years for their special education students. She asked that they e-mail her if they have any comments or suggestions related to this.

Review of the 2008-2009 Work Plan

Teresa Holt stated that the next Council meeting is May 5-7 in Ketchikan and their job as the Education Committee is to give proposed priorities to the Council on what they would like to work on in the next year. The Council looks at the priorities and then votes on the top three or five. After that, then the committee develops their work plan.

Teresa Holt listed the current priorities in the work plan as follows:

- ☒ 504 survey
- ☒ Transition
- ☒ Data collection

- ☒ Workforce training
- ☒ Parent training
- ☒ Youth summit
- ☒ SESA funding

The two additional items that are not currently on the work plan are: looking at the bill that gets rid of the exit exam, and looking at the State regulations to change the wording of MR to something more appropriate.

Christie Reinhart suggested that when they look at prioritizing their work plan priorities, they might keep in mind those items that could be funded with federal stimulus money. Christie believes that some of that money is discretionary based on the district and some of the IDEA money can go into general education. She thinks that the guideline is that only 40% of it can go into capital improvements but it can't go towards debt or general working funds.

Teresa Holt stated that the stimulus money has already been sent to Alaska in the initial phase. Then they have until June to do an application and give a very strict plan about what they're going to do with the money for the next two years. Some of the money can be used up to four years. Teresa stated that it's very confusing. Teresa suggested that they could draft something as a Council to send out on AKSPED to encourage people to get involved with their districts and advocate.

Teresa Holt will link the committee members to a Survey Monkey containing the priorities and ask them to rate them from 1 being highest priority to 10 being lowest priority.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 14, 2009 at 2:00 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.